



OFFICE OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

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Linda McCulloch
Superintendent

DATE December 27, 2001

TO: School Food Authority Administrators and Food Service Managers

FROM: Christine Emerson, Director
School Nutrition Programs

SUBJECT: School Food Authorities (SFAs) and Point of Service Meal Counts

This letter defines point of service meal counts and alternative point of service meal counts approved by the Montana School Nutrition Programs.

A **Point of Service Meal Count** is defined as a system of counting meals at that point in the food service operation where it can be accurately determined that a reimbursable free, reduced-price, or paid meal has been served to an eligible student.

There are different ways to count meals served by category each day. Your procedures must ensure that meals counted:

- meet the meal pattern requirements,
- are served to eligible students, and
- are counted daily by category.

Also, only one meal per student per meal service may be claimed for reimbursement. Adult meals, a la carte items, and second meals are not reimbursable and should be accounted for separately.

According to 7 CFR 210.7 (c) (2), "State agencies may authorize alternatives to the point of service lunch counts provided that such alternatives result in accurate, reliable, counts of the number of free, reduced-price, and paid lunches served, respectively, for each serving day."

The following is an **approved alternative** to the Point of Service Meal Count:

SFAs may take a meal count at the beginning of the meal service line, provided a staff person at the end of the meal line checks to ensure the student has a reimbursable meal.

Additionally, SFAs on Special Provisions follow simplified counting procedures.

If an SFA wishes to elect a meal counting system that is not listed above, a letter requesting the alternate meal counting system needs to be submitted to this office. The letter needs to provide a description of the meal counting system with enough detail to assess whether the proposed alternative would provide an accurate and reliable count of the number of lunches, by type, served each day to eligible children.

Please contact Christine Emerson, School Nutrition Director, at (406) 444-2502 or Holly Humphrey, School Nutrition Specialist, at (406) 444-4413 if you have any questions.

